



**CONTRA COSTA  
WATER DISTRICT**

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July 8, 2010

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Terry Macaulay  
650 Capitol Mall, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Comments for Risk Reduction Workgroup July 8, 2010**

*Terry*  
Dear Ms. Macaulay:

Contra Costa Water District appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on important Delta Plan elements such as risk reduction. Please see our attached comments regarding the risk reduction workshop held July 8, 2010. We have provided answers to the most pertinent questions posed in the workgroup announcement.

Please feel free to contact me (925) 688-8100 or Maureen Martin at (925) 688-8323 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Greg Gartrell  
Assistant General Manager

GG/MM:wec

Attachment

cc: Delta Stewardship Council

1. *What and where are the most significant short-term and medium-term levee risks in the Delta?*

**Sherman Island** is one of the westernmost islands that mark the transition from an estuarine system to a freshwater system. It is owned by the Department of Water Resources. The size and shape of Sherman Island limits the amount of seawater that intrudes into the Delta. If levees around the island were to fail, the island would flood with a large volume of water, potentially drawing in a significant amount of saline water from Suisun Bay into the Delta. If the levees are not repaired, the tidal action in the flooded island would effectively pump salt into the Delta, degrading water quality in the Delta interior. Sherman Island also has significant infrastructure, including Highway 160, power lines and pipelines. Further investment into the levees around Sherman Island should be made, as well as other western islands including Twitchell Island and Jersey Island for similar reasons. **Victoria Island** and other Central Delta islands are also in a strategic location. The location, size and shape of these islands protect the Mokelumne Aqueduct and CCWD's intakes, and afford CCWD, EBMUD, as well as SWP and CVP access to relatively fresh water. These islands also have significant infrastructure, including Highway 4, rail lines and power lines. If the levees were to fail and the island to flood, the infrastructure would be at risk and the water supply reliability and water quality for over 23 million Californians could be affected. Securing the existing configuration of these islands should be a top levee investment.

**Contra Costa Canal Levee Elimination and Flood Mitigation Project**

Phase II of the project will remove a total of 8 miles of levees that constitute the unlined (earthen) portion of the Contra Costa Canal and replace it with a pipeline. These levees, constructed in the late 1930's as part of the Contra Costa Canal, were not designed for flood control; replacement of this section with a pipeline will protect water quality, remove a significant flood hazard and allow the Dutch Slough Project to move forward. The Dutch Slough Project Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan includes a commitment that their levees will not be breached until the portion of the Contra Costa Canal along the adjacent property boundary has been encased.

2. *How should the state prioritize these risks?*

The state should prioritize projects that protect infrastructure and state water supplies. Islands and levee systems that protect homes, roads, gas pipelines, power lines, aqueducts and water conveyance pipelines should receive the highest priority. In particular the state should focus on reinforcing levees in the south central Delta that currently convey water to the SWP pumps and those that provide protection from salinity intrusion in the western Delta.

3. *What are the most effective ways to address the priority levees, given the state's restricted resources? (including but not limited to levee operation, maintenance, and improvements)*

The first action should be to bring Delta levees up to current standards. Many levees do not meet USACE or FEMA standards and in the event of an emergency, many areas of

the Delta may not qualify to receive federal assistance. Priority should be established based on a risk assessment of failure and the cost accrued in the event of levee failure. The highest priority should be given to those levees that have the highest risk of failure and highest cost to replace or repair in the event of failure. This type of categorization may show that the highest priority levees should be built up beyond the minimum federal standards in order to provide the appropriate level of protection.

The levee subvention program was established in 1973 and calls on DWR to prioritize the islands for the receipt of grant funding and recommend priority to the Central Valley Flood Protection Board. The Board reviews the recommendation and can enter into an agreement with local Reclamation Districts to reimburse eligible costs. This is an important program that should be continued and bolstered. The Delta Stewardship Council should support the increase of staff and money allocated for the program. Improving the resources available to this program will improve the prioritization process of levees and expedite the maintenance for levees.

4. *What types of flood-related emergency planning activities should be conducted in the Delta and how should they be prioritized?*

In light of recent catastrophes such as Hurricane Katrina, California must do as much as possible to reduce the risk of levee failure but also ensure that local, state and federal agencies are prepared in the event of a natural disaster such as a major earthquake and/or major levee failure. Tabletop exercises should be conducted outlining specific lines of communication, responsibilities, and roles of various agencies. Once a protocol has been established on paper, it is crucial that these plans be tested in the field. Delta wide emergency exercises should be conducted on a regular basis. Practicing before disaster strikes will allow for improvements of the emergency response plan and promote face to face cooperation among agencies which will be critical in responding to a real crisis.

5. *What immediate actions should be taken for high-risk areas*
6. *What agency coordination would best achieve effective emergency planning and implementation?*

Secure funding for levee improvements and risk reduction projects. For example, it is crucial that CCWD receive sufficient funding assurances to allow pre-construction activities to begin in the fall of 2010 so that a significant portion of the Contra Costa Canal adjacent to the Dutch Slough site can be encased in 2011, allowing the Dutch Slough Project to be completed on schedule. The help of the Delta Stewardship Council in securing funding for these two inter-related and important projects would be greatly appreciated.